

INTENTIONS REMAIN MYSTERY

Soviet Military Growth Creating U.S. Concern

BY ROBERT C. TOTH
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WASHINGTON—Soviet military power has expanded dramatically across the board in this decade, from strategic missiles and warships to tanks, artillery and even manpower, which has been increased by 30%.

The relentless upward trend raises fears that the Kremlin seeks to be

U.S. Reassessment: What Are the Soviets Up To?

militarily superior to the United States, not just equal.

How and why has this buildup taken place? Will it continue? Will it be used to support more Soviet adventures in Africa, to carry out political blackmail in Europe? Will it tempt Moscow into greater risk-taking generally to test Washington's resolve?

Seeking answers to such questions solely by studying military capabilities can be dangerous. As Lt. Gen. William Y. Smith, assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, put it, "By using measures by which we assess military effectiveness today, the British and French should have stopped the Germans in 1940."

And intentions are much harder to assess than capabilities. Soviet political intentions are especially difficult. Winston Churchill said in 1939, "I cannot forecast to you the actions of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

Much the same can be said today. In fact, the White House earlier this year sent an eight-page memo to the CIA listing State and Defense department complaints about the inadequacy of CIA forecasts of Soviet aims.

The situation nonetheless demands careful attention, as Defense Secretary Harold Brown recently emphasized.

"Exactly why the Soviets are pushing so hard to improve their strategic nuclear capabilities is uncertain," Brown said. "What is certain is that we cannot ignore their efforts, or assume they are motivated by considerations of altruism or of pure deterrence."

Despite the uncertainties, interviews with government and private arms experts permit two conclusions that are widely supported:

1—The Soviet buildup—"steady, deliberate, impressive," as the Joints Chiefs of Staff described it—will be harder for the Kremlin to maintain over the next 15 years. The Soviet economy, mobilized for decades to buildup the military, is slowing perceptibly. Difficult political, economic and military choices will have to be made, and the decisions will not be made easier by probable changes of leadership.

2—Whatever the future, existing Soviet military strength causes real concern and probably requires response. The Soviets are close to neutralizing the U.S. land-based Minuteman missile force and have reduced the effectiveness of the U.S. fleet of B-52 bombers. As a result, military specialists say, a less vulnerable intercontinental ballistic missile will have to be deployed, along with the air-launched cruise missile, regardless of whether there is a new strategic arms limitation agreement.

Soviet intentions are not formed in a vacuum, the analysis emphasize. They will be influenced by U.S. actions, by accidents (such as death and infighting among leaders) and by the slowing of the Soviet economy.

Some of these influences, according to specialists attending a continuing seminar on Soviet policy at the Kennan Institute here, will not make the Soviets any more conservative.

Gregory Grossman, professor of economics at UC Berkeley, said that there is a "real danger that resource (espe-

COMPARATIVE MILITARY STRENGTH

	U.S.	U.S.S.R.
ARMED FORCES	2,088,000	3,575,000
ICBM LAUNCHERS	1,054	1,477
LONG RANGE HEAVY BOMBERS	225	135
SUBMARINES		
Strategic Missile	41	83
Attack	78	187
CARRIERS	13	3
CRUISERS	27	35
DESTROYERS	64	90
FRIGATES	65	105
TANKS	10,000	45-50,000
ARTILLERY	5,000	20,000

(Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies)

Times chart by Pat Lynch

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cially energy) shortages and domestic political tensions will at some future point tempt the Soviet leadership to use its military might in an externally more assertive way."

The military buildup could also take on a life and momentum of its own.

"The military and its vast armory seem to be in search of a purpose," said Roman Kolkowicz of UCLA's Center for Arms Control and International Security, "a goal that would go beyond the static balances and inertias of deterrence."

The improved quality and increased quantity of Soviet arms is not the consequence of an abrupt or recent policy shift. Soviet military spending has risen steadily, about 4% a year in this decade. This is roughly the same growth rate as for the U.S.S.R.'s gross national product.

Thus any Soviet military advantage, whether achieved or impending, would be the result of giving the defense establishment year after year a fixed part of the GNP, about 11% to 14%. This compares with about 6% of the American GNP that goes for defense, although the American GNP is twice that of the Soviet Union.

The Soviets are believed to spend at least as much money for military purposes as the United States, and probably 20% to 40% more. Moscow keeps about one-fifth of its arms facing East, against China, and U.S. allies contribute more to the overall Western defense effort than the East European nations contribute to Warsaw Pact costs.

The bottom line is the balance of forces. According to Gen. George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Soviets have:

—More nuclear delivery vehicles (missiles and bombers) than the United States and lead in every category except numbers of warheads and bombs. Since 1968 they have deployed five new families of intercontinental ballistic missiles and have at least four more families under development.

—A large research and development effort in antiballistic missiles. Such systems could be deployed if the treaty barring them is not continued. Moscow also has a major air defense system and a civil defense program to protect a significant proportion of its key people.

—Twice as many men under arms as the United States (up 30% in the last 10 years), five times as many tanks (up 40%), four times as many artillery pieces (up 60%) and significant numerical advantages in helicopters, tactical aircraft, warships and submarines. The first of three carriers for helicopters and short takeoff aircraft have been undergoing sea trials.

According to Helmut Sonnenfeldt, a State Department counsellor in the Nixon and the Ford administrations and a recognized national security expert, the Soviets have been deploying forces "capable of threatening the effectiveness and survival of substantial portions of U.S. strategic strength."

Moreover, the buildup of Warsaw bloc ground forces and deployment of naval units on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's flanks, Sonnenfeldt wrote recently in *Foreign Affairs*, gives rise to concern that the Soviets can launch an attack on Europe without NATO being able to count on adequate warning and mobilization time.

Soviet forces facing Western Europe, as they have grown in size and quality, appear to take a more threatening stance than before.

"There is little question among experts that the concept which pervades Soviet military thinking today is the offensive," said Lt. Gen. William Y. Smith, assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "More important to me, the Soviets are steadily fielding military equipment that permits them to implement their concept of the offensive."

The large Soviet navy, together with the growing merchant ship and air transport fleets, is capable of moving men and equipment to most places in the world and sustaining them there, Sonnenfeldt noted in his "Russian Affairs" article.

The new capability was displayed in Angola and Ethiopia with the airlift of Cuban troops, the Soviet surrogate force that must be counted almost as heavily as material in calculating the balance of forces.

Moscow rationalizes such intrusions by quoting Soviet ideology. The Communist creed requires that wars of national liberation be supported.

The Soviet Union has built its arsenal by allocating a large part of its resources to heavy (including defense) industry. Year after year, about 30% of its economic growth has gone into heavy industry and, as a consequence, the standard of living has risen comparatively slowly.

To keep the economy growing, the Kremlin has poured manpower as well as capital into industry.

Nevertheless, growth began to slow 15 years ago. The slowdown has continued and, according to CIA estimates, the trend will probably worsen in the next 10 to 15 years.

The slowdown has occurred be-

U.S. AND U.S.S.R. MEASURES OF STANDARDS OF LIVING		
	U.S.	U.S.S.R.
Per Capita Income:	\$7,280	\$3,590
Cars (per 100)	31	5
Televisions (per 100)	50	31
Doctors (per 100 persons)	18.8	31.5
Meat and Potatoes (10 kg. consumed per capita)	16.7	12.8
(Source: U.S.S.R. Facts and Figures Annual, 1977)		

Times chart

cause Soviet factories have aged and grown more complex. Part of each new ruble of investment and each new worker has had to go toward replacing machinery and manpower rather than toward raising output.

This has been obvious to Soviet economists for years. In 1965, the new leaders under Leonid I. Brezhnev made a brief and aborted effort at economic reform. To increase productivity, they sought to give plant managers more power to set the amount and type of output. But this threatened to reduce political control of the Communist Party and was quickly scuttled.

The economy has since muddled along with GNP growth rates falling from an average of 5.8% a year in the period 1970-75. Inputs of labor, capital and land has

dropped correspondingly, and the productivity of these inputs have dropped precipitously.

On top of this, other difficulties lie ahead. According to the specialists, the labor supply is drying up and oil production will probably slow down and even decline.

Further, because of a sharp decline in birthrates in the 1960s, the number of young people entering the work force will fall off significantly over the next 15 years, from about 2.5 million a year in the 1970-75 period to about 1.7 million a year in the 1976-80 period and to about 500,000 a year in the 1981-90 period.

Complicating this will be that most of the youth coming of age in the next 15 years will be non-Slavic minorities from Central Asia, who have long resisted moving to cities in their own republics and resisted even more moving to the labor-short industrial areas of European Russia.

Few of these people know the Russian language and few have any industrial skills. (Their increasing presence in the military is referred to by Russians as a "yellowing of the Red Army.") Further, any massive migration of minority workers to Russian cities has the potential for racial conflict.

Short of moving people around, the Soviet authorities could increase the work force by shortening the service period for military draftees, by reducing the size of the army or by raising the retirement age for civilians. However, none of these would be popular—with the military or with civilians.

Another approach to boost the economy would be to increase productivity, either by increasing discipline or by stepping up purchases of Western technology.

Factory managers have long sought greater authority over workers to reduce lost time, but enforcement measures.

More technology can help in factories and on farms—in agriculture especially, where one out of every four Soviet workers is employed and labor productivity is only one-tenth of the U.S. level. Imports of machinery and equipment rose from \$510 million in 1965 to \$5 billion in 1975.

But this strategy increases Soviet dependence on the West for spare parts and maintenance and

requires the Soviet Union to use more hard Western currency. They have few products that the West wants, except oil, which accounts for about half of the U.S.S.R.'s hard currency earnings of \$10 billion a year.

The CIA believes that an energy crisis is ahead for the Soviet Union. It is a controversial forecast, dis-

puted by the Defense Intelligence Agency and by private oil experts. But the CIA has stuck to its prediction that the rate of increase for Soviet oil production will slow and even stop.

If true, this would force the Kremlin to curtail overall economic growth—which would mean increased energy consumption—or to reduce oil exports or even become an oil importer.

The Soviet Union is now the top oil producing nation in the world. In 1976 its production was 10.4 million barrels a day, of which 3 million was exported (1 million to hard currency countries). Thus consumption was about 7.4 million barrels a day. In comparison, the United States consumed 18 million barrels a day, of which it produced

The consensus is that Moscow faces an energy problem of uncertain dimensions, partly because of industry's profligate use of oil, short-sighted and wasteful techniques of extracting it and the increased cost of exploiting fields in distant Siberia.

According to the CIA, the result of all this will be that the growth rate will drop from the current 3.7% a year to perhaps 2% or 2.5% in the 1980s unless the Politburo takes strong—and probably divisive—steps.

In any case, the likelihood is that Soviet attempts to close the economic gap with the United States will falter. The Soviet GNP was one-third the size of the U.S. GNP in 1960. Now it is half the size. The U.S. figure includes a higher proportion of services that provides Americans a large edge in the standard of living.

New leadership might try to restrain defense spending, but neither of two former premiers—Georgi Malenkov and Nikita S. Khrushchev—was able to do it. Brezhnev has never tried.

The Soviet military establishment holds a pivotal position. It has a voice in the Politburo and military men make up 12% of the party's Central Committee. U.S. negotiators have been told that only the Soviet Defense Ministry can initiate arms control proposals.

In any succession quarrel among the leadership, the military has at least veto power. So the military is likely to remain, as Lenin told the state to keep it, "The apple of our eye."

Next: The Soviet people and the Communist Party.

U.S. AND U.S.S.R. COMPARATIVE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS		
Index of Industrial Production Index (1970 = 100)		
	U.S.	U.S.S.R.
1960	61	54
1965	83	76
1970	100	100
1975	109	131
* 1976	120	136
Rate of Growth 1975 - 76:		
	US: +10.1%	
	USSR: + 3.8%	
Index of Agricultural Production Index (1970 = 100)		
	U.S.	U.S.S.R.
1965	97	80
1970	100	100
1975	110	97
* 1976	110	103
Rate of Growth 1975 - 1976:		
	US: 0	
	USSR: +6.2%	
* (preliminary figures)		
(Source: Handbook of Economic Statistics, CIA, Sept. 1977)		

Times chart

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